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ATTORNEY GENERAL WARNS BISMARCK RESIDENTS OF UNLICENSED CONTRACTORS

BISMARCK – Attorney General Wayne Stenehjem reminds Bismarck residents of the need for caution when hiring contractors to complete repairs to their homes and businesses after the recent hail storm. Severe weather damage attracts door-to-door repair operators and out-of-state contractors who swarm the area. These contractors may seem attractive at first because they do not have a long waiting list.

“Many transient operators are scam artists looking for the next victim. Don’t make it easy for them.” said Stenehjem. “A reputable local company will be around later if you have problems, and that alone may be worth the wait. Stenehjem continued, “If you absolutely can’t wait, be careful.”

If a contractor or door-to-door operator is not from the Bismarck area, they may be required to have a "Transient Merchant License," issued by the Attorney General's office, and also to post a bond. If there is a problem with a transient merchant's product or service, the consumer may be able to file a claim against the bond.

According to Parrell Grossman, Director of the Attorney General's Consumer Protection Division, contractors doing a job for more than \$2,000 must have a contractor's license. “For your protection, before hiring anyone ensure the contractor is properly licensed,” Grossman said. Consumers should contact the Secretary of State's Licensing Division at 701-328-3665, or toll-free at 1-800-352-0867 ext. 83665, to verify a contractor's license.

Stenehjem advises property owners to be on the look-out for signs of fraud, including:

- Arrival in an unmarked van or truck;
- Someone who comes to the door and claims to have “just finished a job” helping a neighbor and can now give a great price because there are materials left over;
- High pressure sales practices/threats such as “this price is available today only”;
- Requiring payment in full before the work is done “to get a fantastic discount”;
- An offer of discounts for finding other customers;
- Refusing to provide references, or proof of required licenses and insurance.

For more information about transient merchant or consumer fraud issues, contact the Consumer Protection Division of the Office of Attorney General, at (701) 328-3404 or toll free at 1-800-472-2600.